Stream Builders

See how clear details explain an animal's impact.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2 "Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence in each paragraph that states the paragraph's main idea. Then number three details that explain how beaver dams affect water, land, living things, or people.

How Beaver Dams Matter

1. Beaver dams change streams and help beavers make safer homes. These busy mammals build dams from branches, mud, and stones. A dam slows moving water and creates a pond behind it. Beavers use the pond to swim, find food, and reach a lodge with an underwater entrance. This entrance helps keep the animals safer from many land predators.

2. Beaver dams also change the land around a stream. Because water moves more slowly, soil often stays in the pond instead of washing downstream. Over time, this soil can make the pond shallower and create wet, muddy edges. These wetlands may provide homes for frogs, fish, birds, and insects. In this way, one beaver dam can affect many living things in and near the water.

3. Beaver dams can also affect people and offer clues about how water shapes land. However, a dam may flood trails, roads, or fields when it raises the water level. People sometimes protect these places with devices that let some water flow through a dam. Overall, beavers are small animals with a large effect on their environment and nearby habitats.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What main idea does the first paragraph explain? Use one detail from the paragraph to support your answer.

2. Which details in the second paragraph explain how a beaver dam can help other living things?

3. What word signals a change from helpful effects to a possible problem in the third paragraph? What problem follows it?

4. How does the last sentence work as a conclusion for the whole passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a six-sentence explanatory paragraph about how one animal changes its habitat. Include a clear topic sentence, at least three accurate facts, a linking word such as because, also, or for example, and a concluding sentence.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence in each paragraph that states the paragraph's main idea. Then number three details that explain how beaver dams affect water, land, living things, or people. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What main idea does the first paragraph explain? Use one detail from the paragraph to support your answer.	**Beaver dams change streams and help beavers make safer homes. One supporting detail is that a dam creates a pond that beavers use to reach their lodge.**
2	Which details in the second paragraph explain how a beaver dam can help other living things?	**Slower water lets soil stay in the pond, which can create wet, muddy edges. These wetlands may provide homes for frogs, fish, birds, and insects.**
3	What word signals a change from helpful effects to a possible problem in the third paragraph? What problem follows it?	**However. A dam may flood trails, roads, or fields when it raises the water level.**
4	How does the last sentence work as a conclusion for the whole passage?	**It sums up the main point that beavers have a large effect on their environment and nearby habitats.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Earthworms change soil as they travel underground. They make tunnels that let air and water move through the soil. As worms eat dead plant material, they leave behind waste that adds nutrients to the soil. This nutrient-rich waste can help plants grow. For example, roots can spread through the loose soil in worm tunnels. Overall, earthworms help make soil healthier for plants.

Accept equivalent wording that identifies the passage's main ideas, relevant supporting details, the transition word, and the concluding summary. For the writing task, accept any accurate animal example that has six sentences and includes the required explanatory parts.